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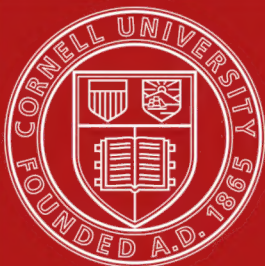
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ST. HELEN'S CHAPEL,
COLCHESTER.

BY
J. H. ROUND, M.A.



PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION
BY
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.

ST. HELEN'S CHAPEL, COLCHESTER.



S. HELEN'S CHAPEL.
As it appeared before its restoration.

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St. Helen's Chapel, Colchester.

THE chapel of St. Helen, within the walls of Colchester, stands in what is now Maidenburgh Street, which was formerly also known by the name of St. Helen's Lane. Its invocation, its position, its form, and its materials are of considerable interest and significance in themselves, apart from its documentary and ascertained history.

Dealing first with its dedication to St. Helen, we are confronted at once with the curious and venerable local tradition that Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, was a native of Colchester, and the daughter of its ruler, Coel, Duke of Colchester, and governor of Hertfordshire and Essex. It is unnecessary here to treat of this strange fancy at length, but its connection with St. Helen's Chapel is such that it must be referred to. From analogous instances there can be no question that Coel himself (better known as the "Old King Cole" of nursery song), was an eponymous hero extracted from "*Colchester*" by some early and ingenious philologist. The Anglo-Saxon had a tendency in this direction, which makes it tolerably certain that to him King Coel owes his origin, a conclusion confirmed by the name "*Col-*

kyngs Castle," once borne by the bastions at the Balkon or Western Gate, which is clearly of Anglo-Saxon derivation. The belief in his existence and his local popularity is also shown by such names as those of King Coel's Kitchen, on the London Road; King Coel's Hall, formerly in the Castle; and King Coel's Pump, at the top of the High Street, of which, however, Morant ingenuously admits that "there is no proof of the Well's being of so ancient a date as King Coel." But though Coel's existence can thus be accounted for, it is by no means so easy to explain the introduction of the Empress Helena, and her affiliation, in the legend, as his daughter. As the mother of the first Christian Emperor, she exercised, no doubt, on monkish chroniclers, a peculiar and natural fascination; still, this would not account for her strange association with Colchester. The legend is found in fullest detail in one of those curious local chronicles which are found in some of our older towns, - as for instance at Exeter, in which legend, fact, and fable are combined in a hopeless jumble. At Colchester, this chronicle is preserved in MS., on a leaf of what is known as the Oath-Book, and is the original, and indeed the sole authority, for the fact that St. Helen's Chapel was founded by the Empress herself, a fact to which, indeed, it refers as a tradition ("ut dicitur"). Though the handwriting has been held to belong to the earlier half of the fourteenth century, the latest entry is that for 1239, and this MS. may, therefore, be only a copy of a chronicle compiled at a somewhat earlier date. Indeed, though it is only in this singular record that we are given the dates of these events, the birth of Helen in 242, the siege of Colchester, and her marriage to Constantius in 264, with the birth of their son Constantine at Colchester in 265,

etc., etc., yet the main fact that she was born at Colchester, and was a daughter of Coel, is found long before, as, for instance in Geoffrey of Monmouth (whose account should be compared with that given in the above chronicle), and in the independent (though contemporary) narrative of Henry of Huntingdon, whose statement that Constantius "had to wife the daughter of the British King of Colchester, whose name was Coel, Helena to wit . . . which Helena, a noble daughter of Britain, is said to have surrounded London with the wall now standing, and to have adorned Colchester with its walls,"¹ contains, in the latter clause, a unique addition. There is also a very curious early allusion to it in the local history of St. John's Abbey, which will be found printed in the *Monasticon*; and which possibly enshrines the local legend from which both the above writers derived the story.² In both the common seals of the borough, Helen with her cross is the principal object, and in the first of the two, which, it is thought, may be as early as the thirteenth century, the legend round the seal appears specially to refer to the belief that she was born at Colchester. The chief religious guild or fraternity in the town was that of St. Helen, and was founded in her honour, in the chapel of the Holy Cross (on the west of the town), in 1401-2. This *guild* must not in any way be confused with the *chapel* of St. Helen, with which it has nothing to do. The chapel itself remains at once the earliest and most abiding witness

¹ "Accepitque filiam regis Britannici de Colecestrâ, cui nomen erat Coel, scilicet Helenam. . . . Helena vero, Britannie nobilis alumna, Londoniam muro, quod adhuc superest, cinxisse fertur, et Colecestriam mœnibus adornasse".—Pp. 29-30 (*Rolls Edition*).

² "Traditur tamen Helenam, quondam imperii matrem, ex hac civitate natam et educatam, quæ quanti fuerit, vel eo conjicitur, quod Constantius, Constantini Magni genitor, triennio dicitur hanc obsedis, nec obtinuisse, nisi tandem per Helenæ nuptias."

to the association of Helena with Colchester, and if it did not actually originate the story, it certainly served to confirm it. The only other local place-name commemorating St. Helen, would seem to be that of "Seint Eleynepet," apparently identical with the "puteum Sce. Elene," *alias* "St. Helen's Well," which is frequently mentioned in the "Oath Book," but of which the memory is now lost.

The learned and industrious historian of Colchester, the Rev. Philip Morant, writing in the middle of the last century, stubbornly and, indeed, enthusiastically maintained the claim of Colchester to be the birthplace of Helen, whose emblem (the Cross) he professed to detect not only in the armorial bearings of the town (in which, though the point has been disputed, he may have been possibly right), but even in the plan of the streets, and of the foundation vaults of the castle! His contention, which he supported with much erudition, evoked the applause of the eccentric Stukeley, who, in a letter (1753), now in Mr. Round's possession urged that he had himself "somewhat strengthened the argumentation," and angrily complained that the sceptical Gale "should take any pains to rob us of a fine lady and great emperor."

Leaving these strange and bygone fancies, let us see what light the dedication to St. Helen can throw upon the history of this chapel. If, as seems to be now admitted, St. Helen was a saint in peculiar favour with the famous Offa, King of Mercia (758-794), the fact that, in the course of his victorious career, he extended his dominion over this district, suggests that we may have in this chapel an actual foundation of his own, which would give it, if accepted, an antiquity of some 1100 years.

The question is of such interest as to deserve some further investigation. There is a curious story in the Annals of St. Alban's (of which Abbey Offa was himself the founder), that St. Alban's, Wood Street, in London, "was originally a chapel of King Offa, by whom it was founded, and whose palace adjoined it."¹ Now the position of St. Helen's Chapel is certainly suggestive on the question. Its east end, which now abuts on the street, must originally have abutted on the precincts of that remarkable and mysterious enclosure which appears, at least from Roman times, to have formed the stronghold of Colchester. The earthen ramparts, of which the remains still face the chapel, are certainly later than the Romans, certainly earlier than the Conquest. If Offa had a residence in Colchester, we may be virtually certain it would have been here.

But there is something more than this. This enclosure represented the *caput*, as it would have been termed in later times, of a considerable area, partly within and partly without the walls, which, as far back as it is possible to trace it, had a separate and distinctive existence as Ancient Demesne of the Crown. The theory I am now about to propound is derived wholly from a most valuable treatise on *The Ancient Tenures of Land in the Marches of North Wales*.² In a striking dissertation on "Boardlands" and their chapels, the author produces some remarkable evidence for the theory that, in Wales, the lord of a commote was entitled to retain in his own hands one third of the tithes payable from his royal township, and that such third

¹ "Fuit autem capella regis Offa, fundatoris, cui fuit continuum suum regale palatium."—*Hist. Mon. S. Albani* (Ed. Riley), i. 55.

² A. N. Palmer (Wrexham), 1885.

consisted of those payable from that portion of the township which he kept in demesne (“boardland”—“*Tir y bwrdd*”), and was employed by him for the maintenance of a priest in his private chapel, the tenants in his demesne or “boardland” being entitled to attend that chapel.¹ Thus, he explains, “the Chapel of St. Hilary, Denbigh, is known to represent the Palace Chapel, or, as we may say, the Boardland Chapel, of the Lord of the Commote of Isaled. The advowson of it was in the Lord of Denbigh’s gift. There is reason also to suspect that the church of ‘Saint George,’ formerly called ‘Llan Sant Sior,’ near Abergele, was at first the free (or boardland) chapel of the Lord of the Commote of Rhos Isdulas. It adjoins Dinorben, where was the lord’s palace, and its advowson continued until 1867 to be in the gift of the *representative* of the ancient lord of the commote in which it stands. Other examples might be given of churches and chapels having a similar origin” (p. 65). I have been careful to give this quotation in full because the theory, so far as I know, is a startling novelty, as applied to England, having never hitherto been suggested. If, however, it might be accepted, it would at once explain much that is puzzling, and indeed inexplicable otherwise, in the history of the Chapel of St. Helen. Its close connection with the Royal Chapel within the adjoining castle, and with the tithes of the royal demesne lands, which tithes belonged to that chapel, taken with the statement that the possession of these tithes

¹ “We conclude, therefore, that as the men of the *Tir y bwrdd* lived near the palace, they enjoyed the services of the lord’s priest. On this account the lord was allowed to appropriate the tithes arising from their land, which was in demesne, to the payment of his priest. The Boardland tithes were held then in recognition of the provision by the lord of a chapel, duly served, which the men of the Boardland were free to use.”—Page 65.

entailed the provision of divine service within the one or the other chapel, seems to me, I must confess, to point with irresistible force to the conclusion that we have in St. Helen's the private chapel of the royal demesne in Colchester ("Dominium Regis in Colecestrâ").¹

The first appearance by name of the chapel, is in the foundation charter of St. John's Abbey. The date assigned to this foundation is 1096 or 1097. It is only from this that we can infer the date of the foundation charter. Whatever its exact date may have been, it comprised, *inter alia*, "the Church of St. Helen and fourteen acres [of land] belonging to the aforesaid Church of St. Helen," together with "all the income (*proventus*) of the chapel in the Castle of Colchester."² From a subsequent charter we learn the fact that these fourteen acres lay without the walls of the town, and, from a confirmation by Richard I., we gather that the "proventus" of the Castle chapel consisted of "decimi et obventiones."³ There is abundant evidence to identify these "decimi" as those payable from the "Castle lands," or royal demesne in Colchester.

It is necessary to inquire how the grantor, Eudes the Steward (*Eudo Dapifer*), became possessed of St. Helen's Chapel, and thus enabled to grant it to his Abbey. Though he may have made the grant within some ten years of the Great Survey, yet Domesday affords us no assistance. We should not expect to find the chapel itself mentioned, but it is difficult, where the Survey is so minute as at Colchester,

¹ *Domesday*.

² "Ecclesiam Sancte Helene et quatuordecim acras pertinentes ad predictam ecclesiam Sancte Helene. . . . Omnes proventus capelle in castello de Colecestria."—*Monasticon*.

³ "Capellam Castelli Colecestre, cum decimis et obventionibus."

to explain the omission of the glebe of fourteen acres, except on the hypothesis that it was acquired between the Survey and the grant. We are still, however, no nearer to tracing the founder's claim to the chapel. The hypothesis I would suggest is this: Just as, according to Mr. A. N. Palmer, "when Marford, which was the head of an old commote, was superseded by Holt, the head of the new English lordship of Bromfield and Yale, the tithes of the Marford boardlands were appropriated to the maintenance of the lord's chapel within his castle,"¹ so when Colchester Castle was built, towards the close of the eleventh century, the tithes of the royal demesne land, formerly *ex hypothesi* paid to St. Helen's, were appropriated to the chapel within the royal castle (the fourteen acres of land being *possibly* granted to St. Helen's in compensation); this would explain the connection between these chapels, their joint grant to St. John's Abbey, and their joint, or alternative, right to claim divine service from the holder of the tithes. Though some mystery still surrounds the relations at Colchester between Eudes and the Crown, he had at least as much power over the royal demesne as the earlier house of Berkeley, for instance, exercised at Berkeley as *fermors* for the Crown. It was in right of this position that he was enabled to assign the tithes accruing from the Crown (otherwise the Castle) lands, and similarly, as representing the Crown, the advowson of St. Helen's Chapel. The grant, however, was subject, as we shall find, to the provision of divine service, and it is noteworthy that this must have been taken for granted, as there is no mention of the fact in the charter.²

¹ *Ancient Tenures of Land in the Marches of North Wales*, page 66.

² It is a singular circumstance, as bearing on the connection between these two chapels, that Mr. Charles Gray, on restoring the (supposed) "Chapel" of the Castle,

One is tempted to believe that the lower portion of the walls of the existing structure may date from this period. Though the local chronicle, to which reference has been made, is so erratic in its statements that its evidence is almost all untrustworthy, it is worth observing that it attributes to Eudes the "restoration" of this chapel previous to his grant of it to St. John's.¹ It is just possible that, though surrounded by fiction, this entry may record the tradition of a fact. It is, in any case, certain that the walls in question exhibit precisely the same construction as that of the walls of the neighbouring keep, which is admittedly of this period, namely, rubble masonry of "septaria," with bonding courses of tiles, and that they contain Norman mortar. Moreover, from the subsequent attitude of the abbots, it may be doubted if the chapel would have been rebuilt after it passed into their possession. May it not be suggested that as Eudes found, on the site selected for his abbey, "a little wooden church of St. John the Evangelist" standing,² so he may have found St. Helen's Chapel a wooden structure, and have rebuilt it himself of masonry?³ If so, its simple rectangular form may possibly reproduce that of the original timber edifice.⁴

composed for it this inscription, which is preserved in his note-book (now in Mr. Round's possession):—"S. Helenæ Aug: Coelis filiæ Constantii Imp: Uxori Constantiniani magni matri Cultus christiani ffautrici sacellum in castro Colecestriæ restitui curavit C. G. Ao Salutis 1753."

¹ "Capellam . . . renovavit et sancto Johanni contradedit."

² *Monasticon*.

³ Just, it might be added, as William of Warrenne found the church beneath his castle (Lewes) of wood, and rebuilt it, he tells us, of stone, about this very time.

⁴ One is tempted to compare the proportions of this chapel with those of the celebrated "ecclesiola" at Bradford-on-Chapel. Here the internal proportions are 33 ft. 6 in. in length × 15 ft. in width. At Bradford the nave measures 25 ft. 6 in. × 13 ft. 4 in. In both, the proportional height is remarkable, and there is a great similarity in the gable-ends.

The next appearance of St. Helen's Chapel is in a royal charter of considerable interest. 'This charter, which will be found in the Appendix,¹ is taken from the fine Cartulary of St. John's, and has never yet been published. Having been granted by Henry II., at Colchester, we can safely assign it to 1157 (23rd-28th May), the date of his visit to the town. On this occasion, of which the local historians make no mention, he appears to have stayed at St. John's Abbey, and it was probably by this charter that he repaid its hospitality. He granted the monks the waste land on the west of the Castle ditch,² from St. Helen's Chapel on the north to the High Street on the south, with permission to hold thereon an annual fair of two days' duration on the festival of the Invention of the Cross (3rd May); which points, of course, to St. Helen. He further granted them as much land round the chapel as would suffice for a cemetery, and for a residence for the clerks there serving. He also confirmed them in their possession of the chapel and its appurtenant fourteen acres.

On the 30th March, 1178, Pope Alexander confirmed the Abbey in its possessions, including "the Church of St. Helen with fourteen acres appertaining to it;"³ and Pope Innocent, in turn, subsequently confirmed it in "the Chapel of Colchester Castle [and] the Chapel of St. Helen's."³ Gilbert (Foliot), Bishop of London (1163-1187), had similarly confirmed to the Abbey "the chapel within the Castle of Colchester with its appurtenances [and] the Chapel of St. Helen with its appurtenances."³

¹ Appendix A.

² It appears to have been known by the curious name of "West o' the Castle" (*que dicitur Westcastelli*).

³ Cartulary of St. John's.

We now lose sight of St. Helen's Chapel till 1290, that is, for about a century, with the exception of a passing glimpse in 1239. In the Appendix will be found the passage relating to St. Helen's Chapel in the Colchester "Oath-Book" chronicle, according to which, on St. Katherine's day (25th Nov.) 1239, it was dedicated to St. Katherine and St. Helen by Roger, Bishop of London, in the presence of William, Abbot of St. John's.¹ The entry must be taken for what it is worth, but there is no ground for disputing its veracity; and the names mentioned are consistent with the date. Bishop Roger, it may be mentioned, had previously been Archdeacon of Colchester. I understand, though I have not been able to verify the details for myself, that this formal dedication would have been consequent on Papal instructions, about the time, to re-dedicate those churches and chapels on the dedication of which there was no evidence. I also understand that, in such cases, the addition of a second saint was by no means an uncommon occurrence. It may be added that St. Helen and St. Katherine the Virgin are found in similar juxtaposition in the case of Thomas Godston's chantry, founded *temp.* Henry VI. in the Chapel of the Holy Cross, Colchester.

Passing to 1290, the date mentioned above, we come to a curious and instructive lawsuit between the Abbot of St. John's and the Bailiffs and Commonalty of the town. The year-book being lost for this year, it is not to be found among the Public Records; but, fortunately, copies of the pleadings and verdict were made for the parties in the case, and preserved in their respective archives. In the Appendix will be found, extracted from the suit, all that relates to St.

¹ Appendix B., *ex orig.*

Helen's Chapel.¹ The Bailiffs pleaded that the Abbot was bound to find a chaplain to celebrate Mass thrice weekly in St. Helen's Chapel, and that he was further bound to maintain the fabric in consideration of receiving the tithes payable from the Castle lands. They charged him with having neglected to find such chaplain for ten years past, and with having allowed the chapel to fall into ruin. They also specifically accused him of removing the chalice, lead (? leaden paten), and (mass) books belonging to the said chapel. The Abbot, in his defence, pleaded that he had no concern with the chapel, that he had never found, nor was bound to find, a chaplain; and that as to the alleged wrongful removal, he had merely lent to the chaplain of a certain Henry de Lacy, who ministered for a time in the chapel, the vestments, chalice, and (mass) books that he needed, and that on Henry de Lacy leaving Colchester, these had been duly returned to him. On this issue he demanded trial. A formal inquest was accordingly held, and the jurors returned that the Abbots of St. John's were bound to find a chaplain to celebrate thrice a week, either in St. Helen's Chapel, or in that of the Castle (according as the Constable desired); they found that this obligation had been neglected for six years, and they assessed the damages due from the Abbot at twelve marks (£8). At the same time they acquitted him of the alleged wrongful removal, and declared themselves unable to say on whom rested the duty of maintaining the fabric.

It would seem that this suit had no effect in arresting the neglect of the chapel, or in securing more regular ministrations within its walls. Morant, by a slip most unusual for

¹ Appendix C.

him, observes, indeed, that "the Abbot seems to have repaired it thoroughly afterwards, if not quite rebuilt it ; for (*sic*) our Colchester Chronicle informs us that it was dedicated by Roger, Bishop of London, in 1239." When he thus wrote he had alluded just before to the fact of its having become ruinous in 1290! We must infer that the Abbot stubbornly persisted in the endeavour to evade his liabilities, from the fact that, on the 7th December, 1293, a writ was directed to the Sheriff of Essex, bidding him hold, at Colchester, an inquest *ad quod damnum*, to ascertain whether "Master" (*Magister*) John de Colchester might be allowed "to assign sixty acres of (arable) land, two acres of meadow, three acres of wood, three shops, and fifty shillings of rent-charge in Colchester and its suburbs, to Nicholas, the chaplain (now) celebrating the Divine (mysteries) in the new chapel of St. Helen of Colchester (*in nova capella Sancte Elene de Colecestra*), and for the sustenance of six poor men, there to dwell, for the soul of John himself, and for the souls of his ancestors, and of all the faithful dead, and of all the benefactors of the chapel, to be held by the said chaplain and his successors, and to be for the sustenance of the said poor men for ever."¹ The return of the jurors was wholly favourable, but, for some reason unexplained, twenty-eight years elapsed before the chantry of John de Colchester was formally and finally founded.

Meanwhile, we must clearly understand the object which he had in view ; this we shall learn from his own lips when we come to his charter of foundation ; but further light, as it happens, is thrown on it by the parallel case, a century later, of the Chapel of the Holy Cross. In 1401-2, the

¹ Appendix D.

Archbishops and Bishops "understandyng" that "the free Chappell or Hospitall of the Holy Cross within the suburbys of the Towne of Colchester" was, "for the smalness and scarsnesse of landis and rentis of the Chapell or Hospitall aforesaide, as it were diflate and brought to nought, inso-muche that the service of God therin to the worship of God, as it was wounte, may not be exercised," etc., etc., granted an Indulgence to all those who would contribute to its "reparation and admendment," in order "that the said Chapell and Hospitall w^t due and congrue worshippis may be used and also repayed." A few years later the difficulty was solved by the foundation of the Guild of St. Helen, within the said chapel, the funds of which were thenceforth to maintain five chaplains and thirteen bedesmen, there to serve and pray. By a similar foundation, on a smaller scale, "Master" John purposed to preserve the Chapel of St. Helen for sacred uses.

Master John was a civilian, as the prefix implies, and became eventually Rector of Tendring. He held, in Colchester, certain private property, in respect of which he was assessed to the tenth, in 1296 (24 Edw. I.), and to the fifteenth in 1301 (29 Edw. I.). The curious taxation rolls, which, in the case of Colchester, are preserved, tell us of his wheat and barley and rye, of his cows and his calves, of his sheep and his lambs, and of his pigs. In later years (1316-7) we find him in possession of the ancient "Soke," in Head Street, originally the property of the See of London.¹ "Master" John must not be confused with two contemporaries of the same name, the one a citizen and vintner of London, the other (John Fitz Elyas) a poor weaver of

¹ Appendix E.

Colchester. He was closely connected with the Chapter of St. Paul's, by whom, 29th May, 1313, he was, with the well-known Robert Baldock, presented to the Chapter of Canterbury (both sees being then vacant), that they might select one of them to be Archdeacon of Middlesex.¹ In October, 1323 he was presented to Great Canfield, which he resigned before June, 1330.²

He appears, after a time, to have changed his mind, and to have decided on a smaller endowment, for a fresh writ was issued to the Sheriff, 18th June, 1307 (35 Edw. I.), bidding him inquire whether it would be "ad dampnum" for John to assign to a chaplain, who should celebrate daily in the chapel, an endowment consisting of the plot of ground in which the chapel stood (*quandam placeam terre in qua quedam capella in honore sancte Elene de maydenburgh in Colcestra constructa est*), of forty acres of land, and of forty shillings of rent-charge.³ The return of the jurors was again favourable, but, as before, nothing followed. At length, on the 12th of July, 1321, the license in mortmain was issued, and by his charter, bearing date 17th January, 1322 (132½), John de Colchester founded his chantry.

This charter is given in the Appendix, transcribed from one of the originals which has been preserved among Mr. Round's muniments.⁴ According to the charter itself there were three of these originals, besides the copy in the chapel itself. Appendant to this charter are two seals, being those of John de Colchester himself,⁵ and of the Archdeacon of Colchester (William de Meleford). The charter opens with an explanation, by the founder, of his motives in making

¹ Newcourt's *Repertorium*.

² *Ibid.*

³ Appendix F.

⁴ Appendix G.

⁵ An engraving of this is given on the title-page.

this grant. He recites that his piety has been moved by the thought that this chapel, which had been stood so long, and had been dedicated to the service of God, might, in course of time, being unendowed, be used for secular purposes, a desecration which would be a scandal to Christ and to his Church. The endowment granted was that described in the writ of 1307, but the ample details given in the charter are of considerable local interest. In addition to the numerous individuals mentioned, from John de Bracy, the chaplain of St. Helen's, down to "Jack the Tanner," we find the following localities alluded to: Small Lane, East Stockwell Street, East Street, Headgate, Wyre Street, North Scherd (afterwards Rye [or Rhee] Gate), East Gate, etc., besides several field-names. The plot of ground surrounding the chapel is also mentioned to have measured eight perches (forty-four yards) square. The extreme elaboration of the provisions with reference to the right of presentation deserves special notice. It was further instructed that the chantry priest should celebrate every Saturday "the Mass of the Glorious Virgin Mary," and on all other days the full office for the dead, except on the days of the Invention and Exaltation of the Holy Cross, on Sundays, and on the greater festivals, on which there were to be special services. Lastly, careful provision was made that the parochial rights of St. Nicholas should suffer no injury, and that the chaplain should be responsible for the safety of the ornaments and books of his chantry, and for keeping both the chapel itself and the property granted, with which the chantry was endowed, in repair.

In the following year (1323) John de Colchester again

appears as a benefactor to the church, being a contributor of £10 to the fund for the works at St. Paul's.¹

On the 2nd of January, 1328 (1327 $\frac{7}{8}$), John granted a further charter, by which he conveyed to the Bailiffs and Commonalty "the advowson of the Chapel of St. Helen."² Morant assumes that this charter merely conveyed to the Bailiffs and Commonalty the right of presentation to the chantry he had founded, which he had originally reserved to himself for life. I think this is an error. The charter relates exclusively to the chapel (*capella*), whereas the former one had related exclusively to the chantry (*cantaria*) founded within that chapel. Observing that the name of the first witness is that of the Prior of St. Botolph's, that according to the inquest of 1307 the ground on which the chapel stood was held of St. Botolph's Priory,³ and that St. Botolph's Priory was assigned as the place in which one of the charters of 132 $\frac{1}{2}$ was to be deposited, one is tempted to believe that the Priory had acquired certain rights in the chapel itself which John de Colchester had purchased from them, and which he now made over to the bailiffs. Newcourt, referring to "Baudake 65," asserts that the Bailiffs at once presented, in virtue of this charter. All that I can find in the town records is an entry in the Court Rolls some nine years later (10 Edw. III.) of their assignment to Ralph de Teye, *capellanus*, of the edifice and easements of "the old Chapel of St. Helen" (*veteris Capelle Sce. Elene Col-*

¹ "De £10 receptis de domino Johanne de Colecestrîa ad fabricam minoris volte."
—*Hist. MSS. Commission*, 9th Report, App. I. 53*b*.

² Appendix H.

³ "Et dicunt quod placea predicta una cum Loci spatio quod ipsa Capella [*MS. damaged*]
—tinet octo perticatas in Longitudine et tantum in Latitudine, et tenetur de Priore et conventu S^{ci} Botulphi Colecestrie."

cestrie) at the annual rent of two shillings. The point is one of some intricacy, nor do I profess to be able to settle it. The only explanation, it would seem, that presents itself, is that the "old" chapel was the fabric itself, and the "new" foundation John's chantry. There is a curious entry in a rental of the borough drawn up about 1387, in which mention is made of "the Chapel of St. Helen, which is called *the old chapel*."¹

Another chantry was founded in this chapel about 1395, by Richolda, widow of Richard de Cosford, of which a full account will be found in Morant's "History of Colchester." An addition to it was made by Robert Fraunceys, one of the two trustees named by her, who, by his will (1416), granted eight acres to the chantry priest and his successors, that they might pray for his soul and for that of Agnes, his wife. From the appointment of Thomas Hovell (*alias* Smyth) as chaplain to Cosford's chantry, by the Bailiffs, in 1535, we learn that both he and the chaplain of John de Colchester's chantry were bound to reside on the premises, and nowhere else, except by special license from the Bailiffs. "On the dissolution of the chantries," says Morant of John de Colchester's chantry, "the revenues of this were granted by King Henry VIII., 12th November, in the thirty-first of his reign [1539], to the Bailiffs and Commonalty, for founding a Free-school and other uses. But none of the revenues of this charity were bestowed upon our Free-school. They were sold by the Commonalty to divers persons at several times." The same fate awaited the endowment of Cosford's chantry, and the Chapel of St.

¹ "De duobus Redditibus Johannis Machoun in Westokwellestret juxta messuagium Ricardi Pekham pro Capella Ste. Elene, que dicitur Vetus Capella."—*Oath-Book*, fol. 86 b.

Helen was once more reduced to the same plight as when the pious John de Colchester, more than three centuries before, had foreseen that "it might in course of time be used for secular purposes, to the scandal of Christ and of Holy Church." No one, however, was now found to follow the example he had set, and on the 17th November, 1541, the Bailiffs disposed of the venerable edifice, with five rentaries adjoining and appertaining to it, to William Reve. By him it was in turn sold (10th October, 1557) to Jerome Gylberd, Recorder of Colchester, and father of the celebrated Dr. Gilberd. In 1610 it passed into the hands of George Gilberd, and subsequently belonged to a Daniel Castle. Eventually it came into the possession of the Quakers, by whom, when Morant wrote (1748), it was used as a Meeting-house. Its vicissitudes, however, were by no means ended, for having been in turn a Lancastrian-school and a circulating library, it was finally employed as an upholsterer's storehouse. The western entrance had by this time been closed, and a large and unsightly modern one opened through the east wall. The jambs of the east window were in tolerable preservation, but the mullions were gone, and the lancet windows in the north and south walls (two, apparently, in each) had been terribly injured, and had partly disappeared. This was largely owing to the erection within the chapel of a floor dividing it into two stages.

It was when the chapel was in this state that it was purchased, in 1883, by Mr. Douglass Round, with a view to reverent restoration, and to its preservation for the use of the Church. The work of restoration was entrusted to the skilful hands of Mr Butterfield, and, although the dilapidated state of the fabric rendered necessary extensive

structural renovation, everything was retained that it was possible to preserve, and the general character of the building faithfully reproduced. The original western entrance has been reopened, and the eastern wall closed up. The east window has been restored in accordance with the hints given by its jambs, which, having a double chamfer, suggest that there was originally some simple tracery. The probable date of this window is about 1300, so that it may have been inserted after the suit described above. A west window has been inserted over the entrance, and the lancet windows (which may be approximately assigned to 1235) restored to their original condition. Unfortunately, it was found impossible to show the original open timber roof, which, however, has been carefully preserved. The space adjoining the chapel on the north has been cleared of the old cottages and enclosed, by which means the structure has been opened to view from that side.

The chapel has now been assigned to the clergy of the Rural Deanery, for the purposes of a chapter-house, having been thus restored to the service of the Church, after its desecration of more than three centuries, in the presence of the Right Rev. the Bishop of St. Albans, on Monday, the 26th July, 1886.





S. HELEN'S CHAPEL.

As it appeared after its restoration.



Appendix A.

Charter of Henry II. [May, 1157].

Henricus dei gratiâ Rex Anglorum Dux Normannie et Aquitanie et Comes Andegavie, Omnibus ministris et fidelibus suis salutem. Sciatis me concessisse deo et monasterio sancti Johannis Baptiste Colecestre totam illam terram vacuum que dicitur Westcastelli. Que videlicet extendit[ur] a capella sancte Helene que constructa est juxta castellum Colecestre versus suht usque ud stratam regiam. Et ut habeant in eodem loco feiriam duorum dierum In inventione sancte crucis cum omnimoda feiriarum libertate et consuetudine. Et preterea tantum terre spatium in circuitu ejusdem capelle unde competens et honestum sibi construere possint cimiterium et clericorum ibidem servientium sufficiens habitaculum, salvo tamen cuilibet justo et antiquo et rationabili tenemento. Confirmo eciam eidem monasterio quatuordecim acras terre extra muros Colecestre que semper pertinuisse dicuntur ad predictam capellam a tempore regis Henrici avi mei. Volo igitur et firmiter precipio quod idem monasterium sancti johannis habeat imperpetuum predictam capellam cum pertinentiis libere et quiete sicut meam propriam elemosinam. Prohibeo vero sub forisfacturâ decem librarum ut nullus hominum se intromittat de eâdem capella vel de ejus pertinentiis sine voluntate abbatis Colecestre. Teste me ipso. Apud Colecestram.

Appendix B.

Extract (extended) from Chronicle in the Colchester "Oath-Book."

1076. Eudo dapifer Castrum Colecestrie construxit in ffundo palatii Coelis quondam Regis, et capellam sanctæ Helenæ, quam, ut dicitur, ipsa construxit, renovavit et sancto Johanni contradedit.

1239. Que Capella dedicata est die sancte katerine in honorem sanctarum katerine et helene a Rogero lond[oniensi] episcopo presente Abbate sancti Johannis Willelmo.

Appendix G.

*Placita de quindena Sce. Trinitatis anno regni regis E. filii R. H.
xviii.*

Abbas Sancti Johannis de Colecestrâ attachiatus fuit ad respondendum domino Regi et ballivis ville de Colecestrâ de placito quod cum idem Abbas qualibet altera die septimane invenire debet unum Capellanum celebrantem in Capella Sancte Elene de Colecestrâ pro domino Rege et antecessoribus suis, idem Abbas dictam celebrationem jam subtraxit et dictam Capellam corruï permittit. . . . Et unde Willielmus Juge et similiter Radulfus Sarare et Alexandrus Tony Ballivi Burgi predicti qui sequuntur pro Domino Rege dicunt, Quod predictus Abbas predictum Capellanum qui in Capella predicta celebrare consuevit jam per x annos subtraxit et amovit, et calicem, plumbum, et libros, qui ibidem exstiterunt asportavit et asportari fecit, et predictam capellam sic anichillavit, per quod corruit, quam predictus Abbas sustentare debet pro quibusdam Decimis quos singulis annis percipit, et que Decime proveniunt de Dominicis castri Regis Colecestre et quas idem Dominus Rex et antecessores sui dederunt pro sustentacione predictæ Capelle. . . .

Et predictus Abbas venit. . . . Et quoad subtractionem Capellani et deteriorationem Capelle domini Regis in Colecestrâ, Dicit, quod ipse nil ibidem habere clamat, nec habet, nec unquam habuit, nec aliquem Capellanum ibidem invenit celebrantem nec de jure debet pro aliquibus decimis. Requisitus si ipse asportaverit ibidem calicem, plumbum, vel libros, vel alia spectantia ad predictam capellam; Dicit quod non. Sed dicit quod quidam Capellanus cujusdam Henrici de Lacy per aliquod tempus celebravit in predicta Capella ad voluntatem predicti Henrici: Et dicunt quod idem Abbas accomodavit eidem Henrico quedam vestimenta et libros et calicem ad deserviendum in Capella predictâ; et quam cito idem Henricus noluit ibidem predictum Capellanum nec predictam Capellam sustentare, nec moram ibidem facere; Idem Henricus retulit et reddidit eidem Abbati predicta vestimenta, calicem, et alia que habuit de predicto Abbate ex mutuo; et quod ipse nunquam alio modo aliquando Capellanum ibidem invenit. Petit quod inquiratur. Ideo inquiratur ad prefatum terminum. Et quoad subtractionem Capellani, dicunt quod predictus Abbas et Abbates ejusdem loci qui pro tempore fuerint invenire debeant et semper solebant pro Decimis predictis unum Capellanum celebrantem per tres dies in quâlibet septimâna in Capella Ste. Elene de Colecestra vel in Capella Regis de Castro de Colecestrâ ad voluntatem Constabularii ejusdem Castri sive alterius custodiam

predicti Castri habentis. Et dicunt quod predictus Abbas subtraxit celebrationem illam per sex annos ad dampnum Domini Regis &ca. Ideo consensum est quod predictus Abbas de cetero invenire faciat, ut predictum est, unum Capellanum celebrantem in una vel alia Capella in forma predicta. Et Rex recuperat dampna sua que habuit occasione subtractionis predictae que taxantur ad xii marcas. Et Abbas in misericordia.

Et quoad calicem, plumbum, et libros, et alia spectantia ad dictam Capellam, Dicunt quod predictus Abbas nunquam asportavit aliqua ad predictam Capellam spectantia; tamen dicit quod aliquo tempore invenit ibidem quedam vestimenta et calicem, et libras ad deserviendum ibidem et ea ad voluntatem suam asportavit ut bene ei licuit: et quoad hoc nullam transgressionem ibidem fecit. Requisitus, quis debet sustentare dictas Capellas dicunt quod omnino hoc ignorant.

Appendix D.

Extract from Writ of 7 Dec., 1293.

"Si sit ad dampnum etc., quod ipse [Johannes] sexaginta acras terre, duas acras prati, tres acras bosci, tres schopas et quinquaginta solidatas redditus cum pertinenciis in Colecestrâ et suburbio ejusdem ville dare possit et assignare Nicholao Capellano in novâ Capellâ Sancte Elene de Colecestrâ diuina celebranti, et pro sustentacione sex pauperum ibidem commoraturorum pro animâ ipsius Johannis et animabus antecessorum suorum et omnium fidelium defunctorum et ejusdem Capelle benefactorum, habendum et tenendum eidem Capellano et successoribus suis et sustentacioni pauperum predictorum imperpetuum, necne"—*Inq. ad quod dampnum*, 22 Edw. I. (Public Record Office).

Appendix E.

"Magister Johannes de Colecestrâ clamat habere unam Sokam vocatam Haymesokne infra mures Burgi Colecestre et in eâdem tenet curiam suam de tribus septimanis in tres septimanas, et nullam executionem fieri permittit in eâdem per ministros Domini Regis."—*Inq.*, 10 Ed. II. (quoted by Morant).

Appendix F.*Extract from Writ of 18 June, 1307.*

"Videlicet an sit ad dampnum vel prejudicium domini Regis aut aliorum si Idem dominus Rex concedat Magistro Johanni de Colcestrâ quod ipse quandam placeam terre in quâ quedam capella in honore sancte Elene de maydenburgh in Colcestrâ constructa est, quadraginta acras terre, et quadraginta solidatas redditus cum pertinentiis in Colecestrâ dare possit et assignare cuidam capellano singulis diebus in Capellâ predictâ celebraturo, Habendum et tenendum eidem capellano et successoribus ejus capellanis singulis diebus ibidem divina celebraturis, ut predictum est, imperpetuum, necne."—*Inq. ad quod damnum*, 35 Edw. I. (Public Record Office).

Appendix G.

Carta de Terris et Redditibus pertinentibus Capelle Sancte Elene.

Noverint universi ad quos Litere presentes pervenerint quod Ego Johannes de Colecestra, Rector Ecclesie de Tendryngga, pietatis oculo considerans, Quod Capella quedam in honore Jhesu Christi et Ste. Elene in Colecestrâ in loco qui dicitur Maydenebourgh a diu est constructa et divino cultui dedicata, ob id quod pro sustentatione saltim unius Sacerdotis, Divina inibi ministranturi, indotata hactenus extitit et existit, possit processu temporis forsitan ad prophanos usus, non tamen sine Christi et Ecclesie Sancte vituperio deduci, Dedi, et assignavi, et presenti Scripto confirmavi, pro salute Anime mee Animabusque antecessorum et parentum atque heredum meorum Domino Johanni de Bracy Capellano, quandam placeam terre in qua sita est Capella memorata, continentem octo perticatas terre in longitudine, et octo perticatas in latitudine; Et Viginti Octo acras terre, quarum Duodecim jacent in campo qui dicitur Edynelonde, Sex apud Aylwynemere, Sex apud Otyenesslade inter terram nunc Radulphi Ode versus orientem, et tres longas acras quas ego teneo de Abbathia S^{ti} Johannis Colcestre versus occidentem; et una acra et dimidia et una roda terre similiter apud Otyenesslade juxta terram Warini filii Willielmi; et due Acre et una roda terre juxta Smallelane que appellantur Seynte Marie londe cum suis pertinen-

tiis in suburbio dicto Ville; Et quadraginta solidatas annui Redditus percipiendas annuatim in Colecestrâ et ejus suburbio, de Tenementis infra scriptis videlicet de tenemento quod Matheus le Verer tenet de me in feodi-firma, in parochia S^{ti} Romwaldi Colcestrie Duodecim solidos; De una shopâ sub solio Warini de Fonte in dicta parochiâ, quatuor solidos; De tenemento Saheri de Donilonde, in dicta parochia, quatuor solidos; de tenementis trium acrarum terre quas Rogerus Wygge tenet de me in campo qui vocatur Ealdapeltoun, tres solidos; De tenemento quod tenet Michael Napeleff, in mora juxta Ordelput, Duodecim denarios; De una Mora sub messuagio quondam Roberti Gest, quod fuit quondam Thome le Hunte, et nunc tenet dictus Michael, octodecim denarios; De messuagio Radulphi Textoris, in Estokwelle Strete quod nunc tenet Radulphus le Knyght, octodecim denarios; de tenemento quondam Johannis Martin, quod inhabitat Cristina de Pebenessh Relicta ipsius, duodecim denarios; De duabus schopis contiguas cum suis pertinentiis in vico de Estrete, juxta tenementum Willielmi de Bedeford capellani, quas nunc tenet parvus dictus Jakke Tannator duos solidos; De Messuagio quondam Nicholai Bateman, extra portam de la Hevedgate, Duodecim denarios; De Messuagio quondam Willielmi Coci in Bereslane, quod nunc tenet Johannes filius ejusdem Presbiter, Decem denarios; De tenemento Germani Textoris in vico de Wyrstrete, Tres solidos, sex denarios; De tenemento quondam Godefredi le Glover in eodem vico, duos solidos; De tenemento quondam Johannis de Estthorpe tannatoris in eodem vico, Octodecim denarios; De tenemento Johannis de Leycestre extra Northscherd, Duodecim denarios; De una placea terre cum pertinentiis extra portam orientalem, in vico de Estrete, que fuit quondam Dulcie de la Broke, et subsequenter Johannis de Burstalle tannatoris, duos denarios; Habendum et tenendum eidem Domino Johanni Capellano et ejus successoribus Capellanis Divina singulis diebus pro me ac supradictis animabus in dicta capella celebraturis imperpetuum; faciendo inde capitalibus dominis feodi servicia debita et consueta. Et ego Johannes antedictus nichilominus predictam Cantarie assignationem cedente vel decedente prefato domino Johanne Capellano seu alias legitime amoto, cuicunque Capellano in dicta Cantaria subrogando faciendam, quamdiu vivero specialiter mihi reservo. Ita tamen quod subrogandus hujusmodi Domino Londoniensi Episcopo vel ejus Vicario sede plenâ, et ipsâ vacante Custodi Spiritualitatis dicti Episcopatus, admittendus per eundem prout jus exigit, presentetur. Post mortem vero meam, volo et per presentes concedo quod Ballivi et Communitas libertatis Colecestrie et deficientibus Ballivis ipsa Communitas per se habeant et habeat nominationem sive presentationem tanquam patroni dicte Cantarie faciendam predictis Episcopo, vel Vicario seu Custodi in forma permissa de ydoneo capellano beneficium aliud non habente ad Cantariam in prefata capella ordinatam in portionibus antedictis quotiens et

quando ipsam Cantariam quoquomodo vacare contigerit. Ita tamen quod si dicti Ballivi et Communitas vel non existentibus Ballivis dicta Communitas per se per spatium octo dierum a tempore vacationis ejusdem cantarie numerandorum capellanum ydoneum nominare seu presentare ut permittitur forsitan distulerint seu distulerit, Liceat extunc dicto episcopo, vel ejus Vicario, seu custodi spiritualitatis qui tunc fuerit, predicte Cantarie sub forma pertacta de capellano ydoneo ea vice providere. Circa cujusmodi provisionem seu Capellani admissionem, in eventum cum presentari contigerit, sicut superius est dictum, si idem Episcopus, Vicarius, vel custos spiritualitatis sede vacante qui pro tempore fuerit per spacium unius mensis a tempore notificate vacationis supradicte Cantarie se difficilem exhibuerit negligentem seu remissum, extunc licebit Decano et Capitulo Ecclesie Sti Pauli Londoniensis, aut saltem capitulo Decanatu vacante vel ipso Decano extra regnum agente in ejusdem episcopi vel vicarii seu custodis defectum, Cantariam predictam capellano ydoneo illâ vice conferre, seu prout res exigit presentatum admittere ad eandem. Et ego predictus Johannes de Colecestrâ et heredes mei dictas placeam terram et redditum cum aliis suis pertinentiis prefato Domino Johanni Capellano et ejus successoribus inibi perpetuo, ut permittitur, celebraturis, warantizabimus, acquietabimus et defendemus contra omnes homines imperpetuum. Et volo quod predictus Dominus Johannes Capellanus ac ceteri Capellani sibi succedentes in Cantaria prelibata celebrent qualibet Septimana in dicta capella per diem Sabbati Missam de Gloriosa Virgine Maria per ceteros vero dies plenum officium mortuorum, Exceptis diebus Sancte Elene, Inventionis, Exaltationis Ste Crucis et diebus Dominicis ac majoribus Festivitatibus anni, que sub duplici officio celebrantur de quibus celebrare poterit cum Collectâ tamen pro me et animabus supradictis. Et ut de prejudicio seu dispendio parochialis Ecclesie S^{ti} Nicholai, infra cujus parochie limites Capella consistit antedicta, circa sua jura parochialia, occasione Cantarie hujusmodi timere non oporteat, Volo quod predictus Dominus Johannes et singuli ceteri Capellani post ipsum subrogandi coram Officiali Archidiaconatus Colecestrie seu ejus locum tenentis infra octo dies post admissionem suam ad dictam Cantariam et inductionem si apud Colecestram declinaverit; alioquin ad ejus extunc proximam sessionem corporale faciant sacramentum, Quod scienter et prudenter non committent quicquam per quod ipsi Ecclesie de suis juribus debitis et consuetis detrahatur. Et ulterius etiam nichilominus quod Libros et Ornamenta eidem Cantarie deputata et deputanda conservabunt, et manutenebunt, et de eisdem fideliter respondebunt, ac omnia et singula necessaria ad sustentationem Capelle et Cantarie predicte debite sustinebunt. Et ut hec mea donatio, concessio, et assignatio, ac Cantarie predicte ordinatio, robur optineat firmitatis, huic presenti scripto (cujus una pars (inserta prius ipsius copia in Libris Capelle ad predictam Cantariam deputatis) in Thesauraria

Ecclesie S^{ti} Pauli predictæ tanquam instrumentum commune Episcopi, Decani, et Capituli predictorum ; Alteraque penes Communitatem sacerdoti predicto et suis successoribus quociens pro manutenenda seu defendenda Cantaria predicta oportuerit, liberanda et rehabenda; Et Tertia in Thesauraria Ecclesie Conventualis S^{ti} Botulphi Colecestrie semper remanebunt, ut per multiplicationem dicti scripti et in diversis locis depositi, hiis quorum interest vel interesse poterit in futurum, valeat esse facultas paracior id cum opus fuerit optinendi) Sigillum meum una cum Sigillo venerabilis viri Magistri Willielmi de Meleford tunc Archidiaconi Colecestrie presentibus est appensum. Hiis testibus : Willielmo Tote, Petro le Saltere, tunc Ballivis Colecestrie, Elia filio Johannis, Warino filio Willielmi, Sahero de Donilonde, Josepho Elianore, Warino de Fonte, Ricardo Norreys, Ada de Castello, Johanne de Waleton, Johanne Belamy, Alano de Neylond, et aliis. Datum Londonie Septimo decimo die Januarii Anno Domini Millesimo ccc^{mo} Vicesimo primo, Et anno regni regis Edwardi filii Regis Edwardi quintodecimo.

Appendix B.

Carta Advocationis Capelle Ste. Elene.

Sciant presentes et futuri, quod ego Johannes de Colcestra Rector Ecclesie de Tendring, concessi, dedi, et hac presenti carta mea confirmavi Ballivis et Communitati Ville Colcestre advocationem illius Capelle que constructa est in honore Jesu Christi et S^{te} Elene in Colcestra in loco vocato Maydeneburgh, Habendum et tenendum predictam Advocationem Capelle predictæ, cum omnibus pertinentiis suis, predictis Ballivis et Communitati Ville predictæ et eorum successoribus imperpetuum. Et ego predictus Johannes de Colcestrâ et heredes mei predictam Advocationem capelle predictæ, cum omnibus suis pertinentiis : predictis Ballivis et Communitati Ville predictæ et eorum Successoribus contra omnes gentes warrantizabimus imperpetuum. In cujus rei testimonium huic presenti Carte sigillum meum apposui. Hiis testibus Domino Johanne Pruet Priore Sti Botulfi Colcestre, Magistro Johanne Luk, Ricardo de Teye, Rectore Ecclesie de Theydon, Elia filio Johannis, Warino filio Willielmi, Ricardo Norreys, Johanne de Shaldeford, Josepho Elyanor, Alano de Neylonde, Roberto le Clerk et aliis. Datum apud Colcestram Secundo die Januarii regni Regis Edwardi tertii a conquestu primo.

